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FOR INFORMATION

COUNTRY NOTE**

Philippines

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country note for the Philippines for a programme of cooperation for the period 1999 to 2003.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. The Government of the Philippines is making significant progress in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The legislative framework of the Convention is largely in place, and its implementation is strengthened by a civil society that is highly protective of human rights; the Local Government Code, which devolved the delivery of basic services except public education to local government units (LGUs); and increasing human priority expenditures. The monitoring of 33 indicators of basic family needs, particularly of children and women, is in process in all of the country's 41,936 villages (barangays). The favourable environment for children and women is due mainly to policy reforms, political stability, improved peace and order, economic growth and a free media. The Government is cognizant of the economic slowdown affecting the region and is taking steps to minimize its economic and social costs.

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* E/ICEF/1998/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 1998.

2. The mid-decade goals on the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, micronutrient supplementation, access to safe water, literacy and school participation were achieved. The mid-decade goals on immunization, polio eradication and the elimination of neonatal tetanus were nearly achieved. The Government's globalization policy has made the economy more internationally competitive, but it has also exposed children to such negative influences as family separation, dangerous drugs and urban poverty.

3. Poverty remains a major obstacle to the fulfilment of child rights. The proportion of the population living in poverty fell from 39.9 per cent in 1991 to 35.5 per cent in 1994, with poor families accounting for 41 per cent of all families. This has been exacerbated by the effects of a very high fertility rate of 3.9 and high underemployment. Serious disparities in maternal and child health (MCH), education and other indicators exist in the 16 administrative regions, 77 provinces, 68 cities and 1,540 municipalities. The maternal mortality rate continues to be high, with the current level estimated at 180 per 100,000 live births. Protein-energy malnutrition has not declined at acceptable rates compared to other countries in the region. Infant mortality has declined from 57 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 49 in 1995; under-five mortality also declined to 67 from 80 per 1,000 live births during the same period. Major causes of death are acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea and malnutrition. Children in need of special protection include 2.8 million working children aged 5-17 years, 1.5 million children and youth affected by substance abuse, and 60,000-75,000 children who are sexually exploited.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

4. The foundation of national legislation in support of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a necessary, but insufficient condition to effect behaviour change at home and community levels, to ensure a high priority in the allocation of resources for realizing children's rights. The strategic alliances built with media and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners over the past decade and the support of 10 donors contributing 57 per cent of the programme budget have laid a strong foundation for the required extensive advocacy and mobilization (including private sector fund-raising) of government units and civil society.

5. The Local Government Code, which devolved authority and responsibility for investment decisions and the provision of services, offers excellent opportunities for closer community/local government partnerships, strengthens priority setting and increases the relevance of programming for children. Decentralization also provides a significant challenge for UNICEF and other development partners to adequately support the universal application of the Convention and achievement of national goals for children and women. LGUs require substantial capacity- building to play their new role effectively.

6. The Government of the Philippines-UNICEF cooperation has shown a need to change from a specific disease control concentration to an integrated hierarchy of activities focusing on what can be done at home, community, basic health service and referral levels to fulfill the health and nutrition rights of children and women in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner. This requires greater integration of health, nutrition and intersectoral interventions, strengthened local capacity, and enhanced health system/community interaction.

7. Significant progress has been made over the past decade to develop mechanisms to rescue, rehabilitate and reintegrate children in especially difficult circumstances. The time is now ripe to combine and integrate these

efforts into more coherent and systematic approaches to prevent and protect children from exploitative labour, sexual abuse, drug abuse and other violations of their rights.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

8. The overall goal of the Government of the Philippines-UNICEF programme of cooperation is to support the Government to progressively implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The specific objectives are to: (a) strengthen the capacity of national and local governments to provide an environment to ensure child rights and manage basic services; and (b) enhance the full participation of civil society to support family efforts to raise, nurture and protect their children. The country programme will contribute to the following Government goals for children: (a) the reduction of infant, under-five and maternal mortality rates and malnutrition; (b) improving the quality of education and increasing cohort survival rates; and (c) reducing the number of children who are suffering from sexual exploitation, hazardous labour and substance abuse, or are in conflict with the law.

9. The programme strategy will focus upon converting the Convention from a legal framework into a well-defined, nationwide "child-friendly movement" involving children, families, communities, and local and national governments as well as the private sector. The "movement" will be goal-oriented and include establishing and monitoring "child-friendly" neighbourhoods, schools, health facilities, media, work places of parents, communities, municipalities, cities and provinces. For example, a "child-friendly" school is one which tracks and brings all school-age children in the community to school and provides for a relevant curriculum and good learning environment. A "child-friendly" community monitors and provides for universal immunization, MCH care, child growth, quality education and child protection. A "child-friendly" municipality or province legislates and enforces ordinances consistent with the Convention and gives priority to children through adequate investments. The political foundation for this movement is being laid through extensive collaboration with the Leagues of Provinces, Cities, Municipalities and Barangays as they have committed to becoming "child-friendly."

10. The programme will include three interrelated components: (a) communication; (b) local policy and institutional development (LPID); and (c) strategic programme support to health, nutrition, education, child protection, and gender and development. This allows for a highly integrated set of activities among these strategic impact areas. The strategy mix focuses on major investments in advocacy, technical support and capacity-building, with service delivery focused on selected provinces and cities to enhance disparity reduction.

11. The communication component will build upon the active civil society and dynamic, free media and information environment to promote the "movement" for the Philippines to improve compliance with the Convention. Alliances with the media, NGOs and religious communities will be strengthened to promote understanding of the Convention and a supportive policy environment, and to monitor progress towards realizing children's rights. The programme will facilitate research on children's issues, monitoring and evaluation of progress, and information exchange among partners.

12. The LPID component provides the mechanism to support clusters of provinces and cities in the promotion of local policy development, legislative action, development of best governance practices and promotion of local investment in

priority activities to achieve local and national goals for children. Local monitoring systems will be supported and closely linked to the communication activities as part of child rights monitoring. The Leagues of Provinces, Cities, Municipalities and Barangays will be key partners.

13. At the local level in selected provinces, cities and municipalities, strategic programme support for health, nutrition, education, child protection, and gender and development will be closely integrated to provide for convergence of service delivery and behaviour change at family and community levels. The programmes will develop, implement, document and promote "best practices", especially for strengthening the integration and management of health, education and social services, improvement of household care and protection practices, including nutrition and strengthening life skills of youth.

14. UNICEF will work closely with the United Nations resident coordinator system to develop the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which aims to maximize the contribution of United Nations development cooperation and harmonize programme cycles. UNDAF will help to shape more effective collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund in women's, youth and child health; WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in nutrition; the International Labour Organisation in child labour; and the United Nations Development Programme in governance, water and environmental sanitation, and gender and development. UNICEF will also work closely with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and several other bilateral donors to test and bring to scale an elementary education package and an early child development package which integrates health, nutrition and education services.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1999-2003 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Communication	2 229	2 000	4 229
Local policy and institutional development	1 785	2 000	3 785
Strategic programme support:			
Health	2 966	10 300	13 266
Nutrition	1 015	4 900	5 915
Education	1 790	2 900	4 690
Child protection	1 990	10 900	12 890
Gender in development	505	1 000	1 505
Total	12 280	34 000	46 280

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.